

KANEGASAKI SISTER CITY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2011

Committee Members: Denise Boyd, Florence Boynton, Juliana Dupre, Stephanie Joyce, Byron Koh, Aaron Kropf, Helen MacMellan, Kathleen Woods Masalski, Amy Springer. Others: Yuko Takahashi, Nancy Pagano (Staff Liaison), Aaron Hayden (Select Board Liaison).

During the report year, the Kanegasaki Sister City Committee (KSCC) remained dedicated to its purpose: to promote friendship and ongoing relations with the Town of Kanegasaki, Japan, Amherst's sister city since 1993. To accomplish its purpose, the Committee sponsored special events and maintained contacts between both the residents and governmental bodies of the two communities that contributed to the mutual benefit of each. Following is a chronology of events related to the KSCC charge:

During September and October, the Committee formed and worked through subcommittees to work on carrying out the many aspects of the anticipated November visit from Kanegasaki town officials. The KSCC was determined to offer the best of Amherst hospitality by attending to every request from the Mayor and by providing several opportunities for him to address and be in contact with the people of Amherst, especially at the fall Town Meeting.

In November, Mayor Kanegasaki, Yoshiichi Takahashi led a delegation of four representatives of Kanegasaki (Vice Chair of the Town Assembly, Principal of the Middle School, and Head of the Kanegasaki Women's Business Conference) to Amherst. Various members of the KSCC took responsibility for hosting the delegation. That included greeting the group in Boston, arranging for a welcome at the Town Hall and his speech at Town Meeting, sponsoring a reception at Amherst College in the visitors' honor, scheduling meetings with numerous Amherst officials, hosting lunches and dinners, and leading tours—including tours of the Jones Library, the Emily Dickinson Museum, and the Amherst Regional Middle School.

The relationship between the two towns originated with an exchange between the junior high/middle schools in 1989. Each year since then, students from Kanegasaki Junior High School have visited Amherst, and at its late January and early March meetings this year, the KSCC made preparations to greet the student and chaperone delegation scheduled to arrive at the end of March. Unfortunately, because of the disasters that befell northeastern Japan—earthquake, tsunami, and radiation—just prior to the group's departure, Mayor Takahashi notified the KSCC that the trip was cancelled. The Mayor emphasized his desire that the friendship between the two towns continue to develop through exchanges.

The KSCC immediately held an emergency meeting and voted to hold a potluck dinner to benefit Japan Disaster Relief. Members volunteered to do the following: get middle school families involved, contact Rotary Club and The Amherst Club to join in the effort, solicit food for the evening from local restaurants, prepare a videotape of the event to send to Kanegasaki, and to arrange for various logistics to make the event a successful fundraiser. More than \$2,000 was raised, with proceeds going to the Kanegasaki Relief Fund, the American Red Cross (for relief efforts in Japan), and the Japanese Red Cross. At its April meeting, the Committee agreed to hold another fundraiser in July in cooperation with Bertucci's Italian Restaurant,

which offered 15% of the take on a Tuesday evening in July.

The Committee's meeting in April also included a report on the archives. In the interests of preserving the history of the relationship between Amherst and Kanegasaki, the Committee last year approved the idea of adding materials related to the relationship to the special collections at the Jones Library. Many items had been deposited in the special collections room in the early fall, and work toward organizing them has continued throughout the report year—and will continue going forward.

Meetings in May and June focused on the Bertucci's fundraising event as well as an event planned for mid-October by the Town of Kanegasaki to celebrate its Emily Dickinson collection in the Town library. Although the Mayor kindly had invited guests from Amherst to attend the celebration, the KSCC decided—because it was impossible for the invited guests to attend the event—the Committee would suggest that it put together a videotape recording to be played at the ceremony. The recording would include congratulatory messages from appropriate Town officials and the Director of the Emily Dickinson Museum.

In addition, at its June meeting, the Committee made plans for the upcoming visit of Ms. Yoriko Kimura; Ms. Kimura has an affiliation with Kanegasaki's Lifelong Learning Center, and she and her husband had hosted the family of KSCC member Aaron Kropf in July 2010. She planned to come to Amherst to continue her research on Emily Dickinson. The Kropf family was to host Ms. Kimura and her husband, and a few committee members volunteered to assist her in settling in and in obtaining access to the Dickinson collections in the area.

To close the report year, the KSCC thanked Byron Koh for his many years of service on the Committee and to the sister-city relationship, and encouraged him to attend meetings whenever it is possible for him to do so. The next meeting—the first of the 2011-2012 report year—was set for September, when the KSCC would continue its efforts to contribute to the October event celebrating the Dickinson collection in the Town library, and, as always, to devote itself to promoting friendship and ongoing relations with its sister city, Kanegasaki, Japan.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Woods Masalski
Interim Chair of the KSCC